

FEATURE ARTICLE



Researching Your Scottish Ancestry Online, Part 2 of 2

by Richard Crowhurst

One of the most visible sites for Scottish family history records is the official government website, Scotland's People, which can be found at <http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk>. This covers a comprehensive range of resources, including Statutory and Parish Registers (of Births, Marriages and Deaths), Census records (1871 to 1901), and Wills and Testaments (1513 to 1901). However, when compared to Ancestry (<http://ancestry.com>), there are a number of drawbacks.

Among the most annoying is the inability to search more than one resource at a time. With Ancestry, after entering details of your tar-

get individual you can browse through all likely matches from a range of sources. Scotland's People makes you search each one separately, so to cover the four censuses currently available requires four searches.

The other factor that compares poorly with Ancestry is the cost. While searches of wills are free, viewing the resulting documents will cost \$13 and other searches require you to buy credits at around \$24 for seven days. For those with a lot of ancestors to look up, this could become expensive and, try as I might, I was unable to find an annual membership option. A year's membership of Ancestry UK costs about \$150 but gives unlimited access to search results.

In fairness, Scotland's People has one of the most in-depth and detailed advice sections I've seen and is worth checking out for this alone.

There are free alternatives although, as with most free and transcribed services on the Net, expect some gaps and mistakes in the data. One of the largest sources on the web is the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints' FamilySearch (<http://www.familysearch.org>). However, my earlier comments about the reliability of data in the International Genealogical Index (IGI) remain.

Another free site with constantly expanding coverage is the FreeCEN website that aims to make free census data available. Data for England, Scotland, and Wales can be searched at <http://freecen.rootsweb.com/cgi/search.pl>. To see whether the year of parish in which you are interested has been added yet, look at the FreeCEN Scotland website at <http://home.chiltech.net/>

~mmjeffery/myweb9/index.htm. If you're not sure which parish you need to look at or you've found the name of the parish and aren't sure where in the UK it is then try the parish locator at <http://www.genuki.org>.

Previously, I highlighted FreeBMD, the voluntary index of the English Register of Births, Marriages, and Deaths. The Scottish version, called Scotland BDM exchange, can be found at <http://www.scotbmd.com> (and I don't know why they've put deaths before marriages, before you ask).

If you're looking for records that aren't available at Scotland's People then look at the Scottish Archive Network at <http://www.scan.org.uk>. Although no documents are held by SCAN, there is a substantial online catalogue that is free to search and a number of useful research tools, including definitions of Scottish currency and units of measurement, that will be of use to any historian dealing with data from north of the border.

If you feel daunted then you can always see if someone's looked into your family already. The Scottish Genealogy Society (<http://www.scottishgenealogy.com>) lists surnames in a searchable A-Z index. Meanwhile, at <http://www.safhs.org.uk> you'll find the Scottish Family History Society, with links to local affiliated societies.

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Richard Crowhurst is a freelance writer from Lincolnshire in England. He writes about many things but specialises in British history and heritage subjects. He is a keen amateur genealogist and (with help) has researched his own family history back to the early 1600s.

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